

Civilian drone grounds LA firefighting plane after collision over Palisades fire

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By Ian Molyneaux

A Los Angeles aircraft has been grounded and pulled from firefighting service in the United States (US) after being hit by a civilian drone.

According to the LA County Fire Department, the Canadair CL-415 'Super Scooper' was struck on January 9, 2025, at 13:30, local time, while operating in the 'Palisades' fire area.

The grounding of the lifesaving aircraft will come as a massive blow to the LA region, as firefighters try to defend homes and businesses from the devastating fires that have so far resulted in the deaths of ten people.

The Super Scooper, Quebec 1, was struck on its wing and sustained damage during the incident, though thankfully resulted in no injuries.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is investigating the incident and reminded the public that it is a federal crime to interfere with firefighting efforts on public lands. If found guilty, a person could face up to 12 months in prison and a

civil penalty.

In a statement, the FAA said: "The FAA can impose a civil penalty of up to \$75,000 against any drone pilot who interferes with wildfire suppression, law enforcement or emergency response operations when temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) are in place."

The regulator added: "The FAA treats these violations seriously and immediately considers swift enforcement action for these offenses. The FAA has not authorized anyone unaffiliated with the Los Angeles firefighting operations to fly drones in the TFRs."

In response to the incident, LA County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone has declared that the FBI would deploy technology in the area to combat any drones trying to capture footage of the five remaining blazes.

Governor of California Gavin Newsom has said that at least six air tankers and 40 helicopters are taking part in the operations, along with over 8,000 personnel.

There are currently five fires burning in the Los Angeles area, with firefighters making some significant headway in the last 12 hours as winds have dropped.

The newest fire, 'Kenneth', which broke out on January 8, 2025, is now 35% contained, while the 'Hurst' fire near Santa Clarita is now 37% contained.

The largest fire, 'Palisades', is now 6% contained and the 'Lidia' fire 75% contained. The 'Eaton' fire remains the only blaze that firefighters have so far been unable to contain.